

T H E
Clergy's late Carriage
T O T H E
K I N G,
C O N S I D E R E D.

In a Letter to a Friend.

Allowed to be Published this 2d Day of July, 1688.

SIR,

PErhaps I am in the wrong, but I beg your Pardon if I can't think so, when I don't know it. On the contrary, I grow more assured in my Opinion, since t'other Night, by all the Reflections I could make upon what past between us. It seems, I say unaccountable to Good Sense, Duty, Modesty, and every thing that becomes a dutiful Subject (to say nothing of the Christian) that the King was not only not obey'd by the Clergy, where it was no Sin to do it, but where the Obedience was purely Ministerial. Had it been to renounce their own Religion, or to receive His, it had been something; but when it was to secure every Religion from Violence and Persecution: Nay, when it was a Declaration of His Mind about a good Work, and not of Theirs: No new Declaration of Liberty of Conscience, but a Publication of what He had done last Year; and that what was New in it, was only the King's Resolution to have a Parliament next Winter, in order to have that past into a Law, which the Bishops seemed only to dislike for want of being done by Law and Still to resist their King and Head, I say, this is something surprizing. In short, the Declaration was in its first part meerly Historical, what the King had done April 1687. the last part what He would do, to wit, have a Parliament in Novem. next at farthest to Establish this Liberty of Conscience. And as this was in truth the Business of the Declaration, the other but the Preface to it, so with trouble I say it, that this makes their Disobedience the more suspected, and unreasonable; for they refuse to tell the World, the King would have a Parliament to confirm the Liberty, which yet they profess to be for, in Parliament. I say, this looks with an

ill Air, and carries too great a contradiction for Men of their Function and Learning; and yet so it must be, or they are insincere in their Petition. But this is not all; The Reverence these Gentlemen have always profest for the Monarchy, Their Opinion of the mighty Power of it, The Character they have fixt on those that have been scrupulous to obey it, in Cases less clear than this, is an aggravation of their Misfortune; for at this rate no inferior Minister is so much as obliged to report the Act of a Superiour, if it is not suitable to his own Judgment: A Clerk of a Court may refuse to read an Inditement, because he thinks the Man Innocent that is impeached at the Bar by it: No Sheriff ought to read a Proclamation, or execute an Offender unless his Judgment concur with that of the Prince or the Judge. It carries (what ever they think of it) the power of Questioning the Commands of Superiours into all the capacities and relations of Life, even where it is no matter of Faith. If I bid my Servant go tell a Man I deal with, He has used me very dishonestly, at this rate he may refuse for this reason, That truly he has a better opinion of him, and therefore won't go of my Errand. Had the King set up for Law making, or intended finally to abrogate Laws, or suspend Laws made against any thing that was evil in it self, or Laws that preserve Property instead of those that take it away; or that it had touch'd upon matters of Faith, or the Worship of God, or intrench't upon any Priviledge that belongs to the Church of England; or if He had requir'd them to read the Opinion of the Judges about the Dispencing Power, or a Treatise in defence of it, in order to Endoctrinate the People, they might have had room for some Exception, and yet in this latter Case perhaps they had been little more than Ministerial too. But when it was only

only to tell his Subjects, in the most effectual way (*more going to Church than to Market*) that whereas He did emit a Declaration in 1687. for *Liberty of Conscience*, (the Historical part) He resolved in November next, at farthest, to hold a *Parliament for the Confirmation of it*: Give me leave to say, without offence, It looks as if the Exception were a *Cavil*, and not a *Scruple*.

By whom else should the *Ecclesiastical Head* speak to the *Ecclesiastical Body*? for it therefore seems to me reasonable that they should have read it in their *Churches*, because they are the *State Meeting-Houses*, and the *Clergy* the *State Mouths*. Will they claim their *Legal Privileges*, and not bate an Ace of being the *Church of England* as by Law Established, and yet refuse to let the Head speak by them the Mouth, His mind to the People, his *Ecclesiastical Body*? Can this consist with *Ecclesiastical Headship* and Obedience? where no Assent or Consent was exacted from them, nor were they to require it of the People; but as I said before, a meer *Report* of the *King's* Mind, referring to a publick *future Act*, of which the Peoples Information was requisite for their own Benefit and Content, as well as the *Kings Service*. I say, for the *Clergy* to refuse their *Head*, and this *Head* too, that they so generally and earnestly desire to wear upon their Shoulders, and at this time of Day, and about a thing they lay they have a due tenderness too, has an appearance as if they would widen Breaches and heighten Animosities, ay, ripen and head them too, instead of suppressing them. I say, it looks so, for I would fain have a better opinion of their Loyalty and Conscience then to think they meant it; However this Conduct goes too far, thusto strive and *chican* with their *Prince*, and by popular pretences to raise themselves upon the breath of the Rabble above the duty they ow Him, this is at least the appearance of *Evil*, and unbecomes *Men of Peace and Religion*, to be sure such as pretend to be the *Successors* of the *Apostles*, that command Obedience for Conscience sake, where Conscience was not imposed upon, and has been pleaded by this very *Clergy* against *Dissenters*, to urge their Conformity where matters of Faith and Worship to God were concerned.

Tho this, I say, and not Religion, be the Case, yet such is the Malice of the World, as to say it, and such has been their Weakness, as to give occasion for it: I confess that has been the uneasiest part to me, that they have acted, I mean their *Mock Martyrdom*, to force Suffering and act it to a Farce. What else can be their Blessing People ten deep of a side, with *Have a care of your Religion, be faithful to your Religion, the Lord strengthen you &c.* and whilst not one tittle of their Religion, but the Liberty

of other Mens was the Case: What shall an honest Man think of this? when the plain English of the matter was that they went to the *Tower* for not reading a Declaration for settling of *Liberty of Conscience* by Law, to hinder them from ever making Martyrs of other Men any more for Conscience sake. This is the Point before God and Men, after all the bustle their Non-resisting Principle has suffered them to make; and 'tis this I am scandaliz'd at, to see a jest acted so much in Earnest, and Religion made one, and profain'd too, by such forced pretences. God give them Repentance and confirm the *King* in his wise course of Moderation: For the Liberty when settled will shame its Enemies, and save and encrease the number of its Friends, for what ever is suggested by ill Men, 'tis *Liberty of Conscience* that is aim'd at. Liberty built upon a *Rock* and not a *Sand*: To be fram'd to exclude any one Party from the Power of endangering the rest: Can we honestly fear *Papery* should break this Liberty, when it even becomes a security against the more refined *Papery* of the *Church of England*? What will prevent the less cannot admit the greater. *The Net which will catch a little Fish, will not let a greater pass.* How unjust therefore are the jealousies of those, and how impudent their Words that prejudice that matter, and will not leave it to the only place where the *Trial* of the sincerity of all Parties can be made? I mean a *Parliament*: To that time I refer the whole Controversy, and do beg all Parties to prepare to make the Session happy in trying not how to divide, but unite upon this great Point; where if the *Bishops* shew their conversion to Liberty, by a tenderness truly due to Conscience in every Party, I shall heartily change the opinion, their contrary practise, for so many Years past, has constrained me to entertain about them, but till then I have greater reason to count their present Zeal *A fit of Art*, than they have to suspect the Court of insincerity in the business of the present Declaration: A thought that Seven Years ago would have been with them *Insufferable* in a *Dissenter*, especially about any Act of power in the *Clergy's* favour. What then can one call Their crime, that in the name of *Religion, and Law*, can bring themselves to contest their *Kings* command, upon his Judges Opinions, in a case of so much mercy and goodness? For such an one this is, and the effect of it Heaven hath already blest: It is what might have become the greatest, and best of *Princes* of former Ages, but it looks as if it had been reserved for the glory of him that now Sways the *English Scepter*; and I confess I can't refrain hoping this goodness of his, will give Example, even where his power can't give Law.